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• Simple water sources, such as hand pumps, if they existed before wilderness designation, may be kept and maintained.
• Pit or vault toilets serviced by nonmotorized or nonmechanical transport may be added where human waste disposal problems cannot be corrected by dispersing or limiting visitors.

Commercial Service Facilities

Commercial services needed for proper use and enjoyment of the wilderness are allowed under special use permits, and certain manmade installations may be allowed for these services.
• Outfitter camp permits may allow hitching racks and corrals made of native material at approved locations. These facilities should be designed so they can be easily dismantled, if necessary, at the end of a season.
• Tent frames with board flooring, wood sidings, or built-in bunks used by a permittee are not generally allowed. However, if their use was authorized in the season before wilderness designation, then they may continue to be used until replacement or major repair work is needed or until their continued use would cause damage to wilderness resources. New installations of this nature will not be permitted.

This is the picture as it might apply to you personally on a visit to the wilderness. But don't be surprised to see some other activities that don't seem to fit the wilderness concept we've described!

Nonemergency Exceptions

As mentioned earlier, the Forest Supervisor may allow motorized vehicles, equipment, and mechanical transport to be used in case of emergency, such as fighting dangerous forest fires or saving lives. In addition, a number of nonemergency uses of motorized equipment will be possible.
• Weather stations existing when the area was designated a wilderness may remain, as long as the operating agency agrees that each time a device needs replacing it will be converted to miniaturized equipment and camouflaged.
• Aerial fish stocking programs that were in operation by State game and fish agencies before wilderness designation may continue with Forest Service approval.
• State agencies reintroducing animals in a Forest Service-approved project may use mechanical transport, including helicopters, if the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture determines that the reintroduction is desirable and that no practical alternative mode of transportation exists.
• Aircraft and motorboat use may continue if their use was established before wilderness designation and if the wilderness management plan shows that continued use is necessary and proper in the wilderness.

Congress specifically allowed certain other well-established uses to continue within the wilderness system.
• Improvements for grazing are permissible when needed to protect wilderness resources. (Livestock grazing is permitted where such use was established before the wilderness was designated.)
• Prospecting for minerals and location of mining claims is permitted through December 31, 1983, under The Wilderness Act. Mining operations on proven or patented claims are permitted indefinitely.
• Hunting and fishing are allowed under State and Federal laws and regulations.
• New water projects or parts of projects are prohibited except on specific authorization by the President. Existing water developments must be made compatible with the wilderness environment or be removed.

Conclusion

Despite these recognitions of human presence, naturalness is still the most important characteristic for a wilderness. Because of the continuing spread of human imprint on the land, naturalness is probably more important now than it was in 1924 when the Forest Service set aside part of the Gila National Forest in New Mexico as the Nation's first wilderness. The Forest Service, with more than half a century of experience in wilderness management, is continuing to seek ways to assure the benefits of an enduring wilderness resource for future generations of Americans.

June 1978

Keeping the 'Wild' in Wilderness

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
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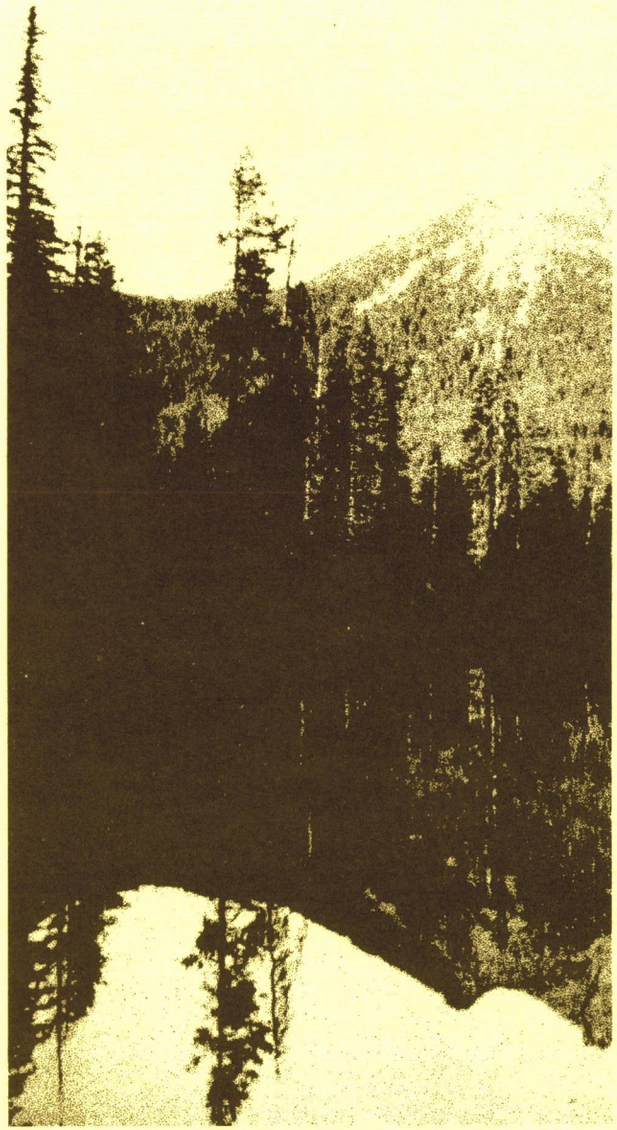


The call of the wild is being heard by more and more people every day. Americans are seeking the solitude of a wilderness for a weekend, a week, or even longer in the National Forests, National Parks, and National Wildlife Refuges. For some, this may be a new experience, for others, a frequent occurrence. Regardless of how many or how few visits you make to a wilderness, however, you probably have questions about its use and management.

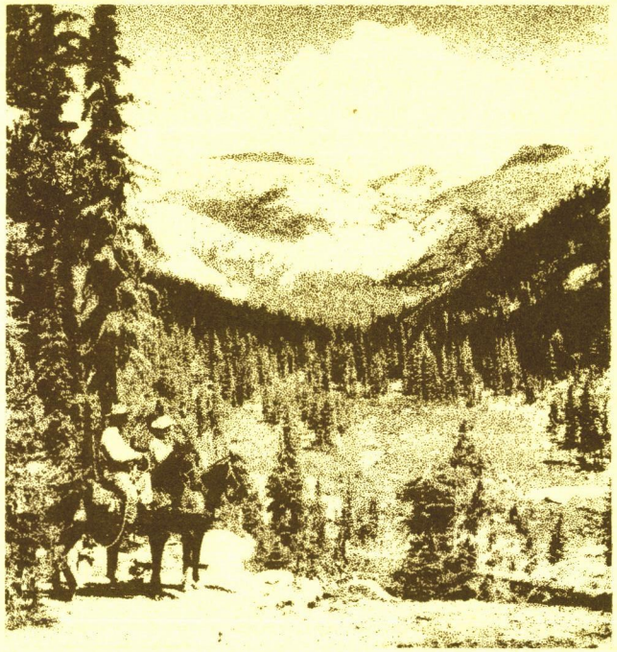
The purpose of this pamphlet is to answer those questions about wilderness in the National Forests. After reading this pamphlet, we hope you will better understand what a wilderness is and how the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, with your help, tries to keep it wild.

What is Wilderness?

Your first question might be: "What exactly is wilderness?" People view wilderness in their own, personal way. Some consider any wooded area, including their community park, as a wilderness. Others feel it must be miles from civilization in the deepest, darkest forest. Wilderness means many things to many people. This brochure, however, is focused on just the formal, congressionally designated wilderness. The National Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964, defines a wilderness as an area of undeveloped federally owned land, designated by Congress, that has the following characteristics:

- It is affected primarily by the forces of nature, where man is a visitor who does not remain. It may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.
- It possesses outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.
- It is an area large enough so that continued use will not change its unspoiled, natural condition.

That's what you can expect when you visit a wilderness. Usually you will not find readymade campsites, picnic areas, or ski facilities. The exceptional natural qualities you do find in wilderness areas wouldn't last for long without some help. So that's where Forest Service management comes in.



Objectives of Wilderness Management

Certain specific management objectives are followed by the Forest Service in managing wilderness. These are:

- To perpetuate for present and future generations a long-lasting system of high quality wilderness that represents the natural ecosystems found in the National Forest System.
- To provide opportunities for public use, enjoyment, and understanding of a wilderness experience.
- To maintain plants and animals native to the area by protecting complete communities of plant and animal life.
- To maintain watersheds in a healthy condition.
- To protect threatened or endangered plant and animal species.
- To maintain the primitive character of wilderness as a benchmark for comparison with lands that have been developed.

The Objectives in Action

In broad terms, following these objectives means that practices that could alter the natural qualities of wilderness will not be permitted. For example, there will generally be: (1) No use of motor vehicles, mechanical transport, and motorized equipment; (2) no buildings, roads, powerlines, developed public recreation facilities, or other permanent manmade structures; (3) no timber harvesting; and (4) no tampering with vegetation for watershed, wildlife, or forage purposes.

But there are exceptions, designed to benefit both the wilderness and humans. For example, if there are no good alternatives:

- Fires may be fought with mechanical equipment, if they threaten life or property. (In cases where fire is needed to maintain natural ecological systems in wilderness, they may be allowed to burn under close surveillance if prescribed conditions of humidity, temperature, topography, fuels, etc. are met).
- Insect and disease epidemics may be controlled with the latest technologies available.
- Certain manmade structures may be installed to protect the soil, water, or vegetation.
- Motorized vehicles may be authorized for use in search and rescue operations.

Other Human Imprints

The Forest Service also permits certain kinds of facilities in the wilderness as long as they do not adversely affect the area.

Visitor-Use Facilities

Visitor-use facilities are permitted only as needed to protect and manage the wilderness resources.

- Trails to protect soil, water, and biological resources, and to distribute visitors are permitted throughout the wilderness.
- Bridges that prevent damage to a creek or river bank, or protect a visitor from hazard are provided.
- As a general rule, shelters are not built. Any that existed at the time of wilderness designation are maintained until they need major repair or their continued use begins to downgrade wilderness resources. Then they are removed. (Cabins and shelters that exist now in vast and remote areas, such as Alaska's potential wilderness, may be exceptions. In such cases, cabins may be continued or even expanded.)
- Camping may be restricted if too many people begin using the same areas and wilderness resources are damaged by such things as excessive trampling of soil and vegetation or fouling of streams and lakes.